



Gothberg Farms, LLC

PROFILE: Value Added Producer Grant Recipient

Bow, Washington

Grant Amount

\$134,000

Grant Period

2016 - 2018

Grant Summary

Grant funds were used to process and market farmstead cheeses made from goat milk.

About the Grant Recipient

Gothberg Farms, LLC is a 40-acre farm and small dairy owned by Rhonda and Roy Gothberg. The Gothbergs manage a herd of 40 LaMancha dairy goats (20 milked) and process value-added foods.

The Gothbergs make cheese from the goat's milk and sell it directly to consumers on their farm and at four farmers markets including Anacortes and Bellingham. In addition, they have an active restaurant trade.

Workforce quality is important to the Gothbergs. They aim to keep staff employed year-round with good salaries. Rhonda feels this type of workforce stability will help maintain the quality of the farm's products long after she retires in five years.



PHOTOS

Upper: Rhonda and a LaMancha doe share a hug on the milking platform.

Left: Staff and visitors alike enjoy their time with the gentle goats.

Lower Right: Udders at work.

How is the public engaged with Gothberg Farms?

Consumers may purchase cheese directly on their farm from a small retail cheese store on the honor system, and also participate in various tours and tasting events.

Running regular booths at farmers markets also brings the public in direct contact with the Gothberg Farms people and their variety of products.

"Consumers learn how cheese produced on small local farms imparts unique flavors and quality."

— Rhonda Gothberg



IMPACT OF VAPG FUNDING

VAPG funding enabled the Rothbergs to add new cheese varieties, build their brand and expand marketing techniques. Sales have increased as a result.

Effective business improvements included product displays on new cheese boards, enhanced on-farm events to draw more customers to the farm, and a better-trained workforce.

“Every dollar raised in cheese sales and farm-based experiences goes back into the local economy.”

—Rhonda Gothberg

ADVICE FOR OTHERS

“This grant is not for the average person to write. I have a MS in nursing and still paid a grant writer to help,” explained Gothberg.

She believes the grant application is geared to businesses who have a department for grant writing. “Not here. I’m the department of pretty much everything,” said Gothberg with a laugh.

Photos

Left: Rhonda is a hands-on business person.

Upper Right: The cheese product line has expanded in part due to VAPG grant funding.

Lower Right: Rhonda wears many hats on her farm, including the hat of cheesemaker.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS WITH YOUR FARM BUSINESS

“Quality first every time, never compromise on that,” instructs Gothberg. “Value product, goats, land, employees and customers above all.”

This successful farm started as a very small enterprise and a sole proprietorship. At the start, Rhonda and Roy never envisioned adding any employees. Their milking herd began with only seven goats.

Yet, over the years with steady careful management and the application of resources including the VAPG grant, the Gothbergs have built a sustainable business and a source of year-round jobs for the community.

©2018. Funding provided by the Agriculture Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC), located at Iowa State University, www.agmrc.org. AgMRC is a national website dedicated to providing information to producers and service providers on value-added agriculture businesses. These partners collaborated to create the Value Added Producer Grant Profiles:

